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DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

PROBLEM:

To establish an overt propaganda position, based on existing information, which is to be taken at present regarding the possible succession to Stalin, and in future in the eventuality of Stalin's death.

BACKGROUND:

The scope of this paper is limited to establishment of an interim position. Sufficient information does not exist in organized form to serve as basis for a policy which would exploit this subject to the full extent of the possibilities which it could offer. Pending acquisition of such information, guidance is limited to the opinions of those who have intimate knowledge of the Soviet system and the power position at its apex. Recognition must be taken of the inhibiting effect of the lack of firm knowledge of the attitudes of the individuals involved or of the power mechanisms which they control.

The following discussion presents the best available line of informed reasoning upon which a propaganda position may be based.

DISCUSSION:

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DISCUSSION:

1. There is no conclusive evidence that Stalin has designated a successor. In spite of some conspicuous absences from Moscow for considerable periods in the years since the war, and in spite of rumors of ill health, there is also no evidence that illness or age has reduced his hold on the supreme power. Stalin is ~~seventy-one~~ <sup>two</sup> years old, but his constitution is rugged and the Georgian strain is notably long-lived.

2. The nature of the Soviet system, a personal dictatorship, disguised under various wraps - party rule, Soviet rule, rule of the proletariat, rule of the masses - a personal dictatorship without any "legitimate ruling family" or "legitimate heir," makes a constitution succession extremely difficult. Even in Lenin's day, before the Party and the Soviets had been so completely drained of all political content and power, it proved impossible to arrange a succession by purely peaceful and "normal" means, without a struggle between potential heirs. *all*

3. Lenin got three solemn warnings of death, in the form of partial cerebral paralytic strokes. Only after the second did he begin to try to create a "legal" succession through his "political testament." Recognizing that de facto his personal authority and prestige had become excessive, he sought to reverse the process of personal power by proposing a collective leadership after his death. His testament was a knock for each close associate (to keep him from becoming personally dominant) and a boost (to keep him from being eliminated completely). But Stalin began to gather the reins of organizational power, "disloyally," while Lenin was helplessly paralyzed. Lenin tried to offset this by a last-minute codicil proposing the removal of Stalin from the key organizational post of General Secretary. This was not carried out. A struggle for succession ensued, involving purges, expulsions, ultimate blood purges, and Stalin emerged as the absolute dictator in a sense that Lenin had not been. Lenin defeated his party opponents in argument, then tried to salvage their persons and dignity. Stalin besmirched his associates, made them blacken themselves, then killed them. Lenin possessed more moral authority, Stalin possesses more physical power. The extravagant cult of Lenin's person was distasteful to him and opposed by him while he lived. It grew up only around his embalmed corpse. Stalin, on the other hand, exacts the cult of his person, demands that it become ever more extravagant. Millions involuntarily admired Lenin. The entire nation is compelled to pay fantastic tribute to Stalin. The difference

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is enormous. Lenin's prestige was unable to bind his associates and his party after his death. The exacted, humiliatingly exaggerated worship of Stalin is even less likely to bind his associates and his party, much less the mass of his victims and their relatives.

4. The extravagance of the Stalin cult, increasingly the cult of an omnipotent, omniscient, omniscient living god, dwarfs the whole of Soviet society, the Party and the Politburo. Everything is presented as the work of "Josif Stalin personally", except the errors and yesterday's line. These errors and abandoned lines are the work of traitors and scoundrels. Thus every other official has a feeling of insecurity, even Politburo members: (cf. the Politburo members who disappeared in the blood purges, and, more recently, chief planner Voznesensky, who not only has disappeared but now apparently has never existed, has become an "unperson"). No one is secure except insofar as he enjoys the favor of Stalin personally. When a man does enjoy the post of crony (the plebian autocrat's equivalent of the old-time court favorite), he can continue on the surface as an apparent big shot even though he be a small potato - example, Molotov.

5. Stalin has killed all his successors, i.e., all the men of the first rank who were coeval and coequal associates of his in Lenin's day.

6. He has surrounded himself only by secondary men, lieutenants, faction agents, sycophants, cronies, and yes-men. He has executed even cronies, for trivial causes, e.g., Yenukidze.

7. Some of these, given space enough - one-sixth of the earth - and time enough, become able executors of his will, just as when he had killed off his entire general staff, new green officers, after three years of retreat and the surrender of thirty-nine areas the size of France, became an able general staff.

8. But his life history shows that he is jealous, envious, suspicious by nature. As soon as any one around him begins to shine, however dimly, by the light of his own deeds, Stalin removes him from the stage, shifts him to a minor post, sends him to the provinces. Examples, Zhukov, Timoshenko. When Zhdanov seemed too popular as the result of the defense of Leningrad, Stalin unceremoniously removed him from Leningrad two days before that city was to be decorated for its heroism. Thus he makes it ever harder for any one to grow big enough or acquire the prestige to fill his shoes, or don the mantle of the apostolic succession.

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There is no authority on anything, military science, linguistics, genetics, music, "the transformation of nature," airplanes, or anything else, except the greatest and most versatile genius of all lands and all times, Josif Stalin.

9. A third of a century of Bolshevik dictatorship, and a quarter of Stalinist dictatorship have destroyed all the illusions that Stalin and his group may have once had as to the popularity of their regime. Their reaction has been ever more force, continuous purge, mass concentration camps, and the extravagant Stalin cult, plus the cult of hatred of all that diminishes or challenges it. His regime is consciously based on fear and force and exacted worship. On his death, his associates will be torn between fear of the masses, which will tend to force them to "hang together" and fear of each other, since only one of them can don the mantle of the succession which is required by a regime of personal autocracy without legitimacy or legal heirs. The mantle can be assumed by one person and only one. The other aspirants will never thereafter be trusted nor long survive.

10. When Stalin dies, the first attempt of the Politburo will likely be to establish the illusion - or perhaps the reality - of a collective leadership to fill the vacuum.

11. But such a transformation of the personal regime, even Lenin could not enforce at his death, in a more fully organized and more vitally functioning party. Hence, at the very moment they are adopting the above attitude, the men in the Politburo will be eyeing each other and maneuvering for position.

12. The only men who have a chance in that ensuing muted or open struggle are those who are in possession of the real power levers which constitute the real organs of government.

Molotov, if he is still alive and still in favor, which is not unlikely given his record for survival, will possibly become premier, but can not conceivably become the boss. He is an irremediably second-rater, and his associates know it. Stalin was boss when he had no state titles, and Molotov could not become boss though he were loaded with all the titles. He is as unfit as Kalinin for the role of boss, lacking even Kalinin's personal popularity.

The real power posts and power levers are three:

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- a) Control of the Secret Police - at present Beria
- b) Control of the Party Machine - at present Malenkov
- c) Control of the Army, if the Army can be rallied around a single person, or if the officers' corps will close its ranks sufficiently to emerge with a military candidate. At present nobody, yet, despite Stalin's careful watching of the Army, not an impossibility.

13. There are strong reasons why a foreign government should not give any support to any of these three candidates who emerge because they are in control of and therefore symbolize three huge instruments of oppression. Inside the party hierarchy, apparent support would be the kiss of death for anyone on whom it could be pinned. Outside the party hierarchy, among the rank and file and the masses, we would disgrace ourselves by siding with these hated men and hated machines, symbols of tyranny. Even worse, and deservedly so, would be the compromise of our reputation in the ranks of oppressed nationalities, the millions in concentration camps, and their relatives and friends, and all the populations of the restive subject satellite countries. If the masses thought that we were supporting somebody for "good reason" that would arouse false hopes in the masses - our one dependable ally. In the party hierarchy, the one we supported would have to become most violently anti-American and most ardently warlike to prove that we were "slandering" him. Even at Lenin's death, one of the methods of attacking a candidate for the succession was to imply that he was a foreign agent or unconsciously expressed foreign interests.

14. Protocol would normally require our expressing, however coldly, condolences at the death of the head of a state. But in this case there is too much at stake, and protocol should be quietly but openly ignored. Josef Stalin has been an enemy of his own people (they are his chief victims, day after day, in an unending psychological war, speedup, abstinence, driving into war on their neighbors, unending purge, concentration camp, setting of each against all). He has been an enemy of all neighboring peoples, personally directing the purges of their leaders. He has been the enemy of peace, maintaining the world in a state of unending partial (cold, sometimes not so cold) war. Our president can not openly rejoice. But it would be a grievous offense against the feelings and the conscience of mankind if he should hypocritically express sorrow, his own personal sorrow, or sorrow on behalf of our people, or the Russian people, or Soviet and neighboring peoples, or the world. Our silence would be noted, and would contribute to the

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feeling that the regime is hated and should not be continued. If we are friends of the Russian people, we can not simultaneously grieve at the death of their greatest oppressor, and one of the greatest tyrants in their entire history.

15. The three power levers enumerated above are not mechanical instruments but actual organizations involving each of them hundreds of thousands, even millions of men. And with families and friends, yet more millions. Such power levers can not be moved behind the scenes, silently and surreptitiously. Whoever appeals to the Party Machine must appeal to some traditions, some program, something in the past and present and something proposed for the future. Whoever appeals to the Army, likewise. And to the Secret Police, likewise. This would be even more the case insofar as each candidate would have to appeal to broader numbers, the entire party, the trade unions, the workers, the peasants, the nationalities, the masses. Thus the vents of public life, which have been plugged up with concrete, will be unstopped. After that, anything can happen.

16. If we have not made any cardinal mistake such as that of alienating the victims by backing one of their guilty oppressors, or by expressing regret at the passing of the chief tyrant, we can soon begin to play a constructive role in the encouragement of those who are once more called into public action. But to do this we must have acted previously not as conspirators backing one aspirant to tyranny against another, but we must have acted as democrats who believe in the right of the people to control their own destinies. And we must have acted as friends of the Soviet peoples against the men in the Kremlin.

17. There is a big difference between the Lenin cult and the Stalin cult which will redound to our advantage, provided we do not fall into the trap of protocol "sympathy." Lenin opposed the cult of his person and found it distasteful. There was no Leningrad until after he died, nor any automobile named after him. The admiration for him at his death was much wider than the party, and a spontaneous mass phenomenon. Stalin has exacted the cult of his person. The first incense was burned to him on his birthday in 1920 (when Lenin was still alive, and himself rejecting such incense!). But the cult became a larger and larger instrument of state after Stalin herded the peasants into the state collectives, bound the workers to their jobs, and killed the leaders of the party, state, and army. The bloodier his deeds, the more he compelled his victims to praise his name. A typical example in his execution of the geneticist,

Vavilov,

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Vavilev, and then the exaction from his brother of a letter praising "the personal care You give to soviet scientists." This phenomenon is multiplied by tens of millions, since every one who has a son, or father, or friend, or intimate, in a concentration camp is obliged, daily, to praise the name of Stalin. Just as the cult of the "Little Father Tsar" proved artificial after the Tsars troops fired on a peaceful procession on Bloody Sunday, 1905, so the cult of Stalin became odious after the blood purges and concentration camps - hated on a scale on which no Tsar was ever hated. Therefore, even if Stalin should finally come to believe in his own death and try to prepare a succession, it is doubtful if he could swing what the more popular and more widely loved Lenin could not accomplish in a time that was cruel and bloody enough, but mild in comparison with the blood-purge, police and concentration camp, and forced-praise regime that succeeded.

#### CONCLUSIONS:

The reasoning above suggests the following propaganda position:

1. For the present, references in general terms to the reality of the struggle for power, but avoidance of (a) singling out specific individuals as participants in or victims of this struggle unless the facts are absolutely established, and (b) any hint that we favor any individual, clique, or power instrument.

2. The most important step we can take on the day it is known that Stalin is dead is that of violating protocol and remaining ostentatiously silent. Because this is an unusual act it will have great resonance and will be interpreted as encouragement to democratic forces and absence of regret at the passing of a tyrant. It would be highly desirable to get

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agreement with the other governments of the free world to do the same.

3. The Voice of America can then step up the intensity of the broadcasts it has been making against the Stalin regime, against Stalinist aggressive imperialism, and against the Stalinist internal reaction and counter-revolution. Parts of our Directive which are at present regarded as premature, will then be, or will rapidly become ripe for implementation. Our first sharp comments can come in the guise of simple reporting of newspaper editorials on Stalin's sinister significance in the life of his people, his party, and his period.

4. Even before a Governmental Agency such as the Voice can say anything, such organizations as the FREE RUSSIANS IN EXILE, with enormously increased help and facilities, and our obvious if carefully restrained sympathy and support, can begin appeals to put an end to Stalin's clique of lieutenants and to establish a free democratic Russia. Only democratic Russians can be used for this purpose lest we be maneuvered into the appearance of supporting a restoration of the Monarchy or a new personal dictator and totalitarian state. (In this connection, the only salutary and constructive rumors that we can circulate are those of defections of parts of the elite to the cause of a free and democratic Russia.

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Russia. We can not support or give people the idea that we may support a Malenkov against a Beria any more than a Himmler against a Goering).

P:JBP:egp

21 May 1951

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